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No. 24 Fourteenth Year June 20, 1947

UNITED STATES

Missions Transferred to National Churches

Presbyterian missions in China and the Philippine Islands will be transferred to the national Churches of those countries instead of remaining under the foreign missions board, according to a resolution unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. at its meeting in Grand Rapids, May 29, 1947.

The Assembly recorded the step as a "great, historic achievement in the history of Presbyterian foreign missions". It was said the move is in accord with a long-standing policy of turning administrative functions of missions over to the national Churches.

The board was authorised to transfer its China missions to the Church of Christ in China and its Philippine missions to the United Evangelical Church in the Philippines. Presbyterian missionaries there "will thus become an integral part" of the national Churches.

In making the recommendation to the Assembly, the missions board noted that "the mission is not a permanent institution. It is a necessary organisation in the first stages of evangelisation but aims to build up as soon as possible an indigenous Church, self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing."

The Presbyterian Church will continue to support financially and spiritually the national Churches and the transferred missions. E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

Churches Report Membership Gains

The annual survey of membership in religious bodies in the United States, conducted by "The Christian Herald", monthly Protestant magazine, shows 47 major Protestant denominations reporting a total gain of 1,534,787 for last year. The Roman Catholic Church gained 438, 453 members, according to the report. The figures were obtained from statisticians officially appointed by the various religious groups. Only those denominations with memberships of 50,000 or more are included, but the 54 religious bodies covered in the survey represent well over 80 per cent of the total membership.

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The annual survey of membership in religious bodies in the United States, conducted by "The Christian Herald", monthly Protestant magazine, shows 49 major Protestant denominations reporting a total gain of 1,234,727 for last year. The Roman Catholic Church gained 438, 433 members, according to the report. The figures were obtained from statistician officially appointed by the various religious groups. Only those denominations with memberships of 50,000 or more are included, but the 54 religious bodies covered in the survey represent well over 80 per cent of the total membership.

The total membership of the 54 groups is 73,673,182, against 71,700,142 last year. Besides the Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church, the list includes Greek and Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Polish National Catholic, Buddhist and Spiritualist groups.

Major Protestant gains were made by the Seventh Day Adventists, Southern Baptists, the National Baptist Convention of America, Disciples of Christ, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Prebyterian U.S.A., Presbyterian U.S., and the Methodist Church. The Methodist Church showed an increase of 346, 379 members, bringing the total membership to 8,430,146. The total membership of the 45 Protestant denominations covered in the survey, is 43,635,058, compared with 42,100,271 last year. The Roman Catholic membership is set at 24,402,124, compared with a 1946 total of 23,963,671. Jewish congregations have a total membership of 4,641,000. E.P.S.Geneva

GREAT BRITAIN — Anglicans and Old Catholics

In order to emphasise the fact of the full inter-communion between the Anglican and Old Catholic Churches, as also to express Dutch gratitude to the Christian Reconstruction in Europe campaign organised by the British Council of Churches, Dr Andreas Rinkel, Archbishop of Utrecht, will pay an official visit to the Archbishop of Canterbury in June. This will be of historical and symbolic importance, being the first official visit of an Archbishop of Utrecht as Primate of the whole Old Catholic communion of Churches to the Primate of All England.

The Old Catholic communion consists of the Dutch Old Catholic Church, which dates from the 17th century and the Old Catholic Churches of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Poland, and Switzerland which separated last century from the Roman Catholic Church.

On June 18, Archbishop Rinkel will be received by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in full session of the Church Assembly, at Westminster. The Lambeth Cross will be presented to him. It is expected that all the English bishops will be present and a very large proportion of the lay and clerical members of the Church Assembly, together with many other distinguished public men, including foreign clergy in London, leading Free Churchmen, and members of the British Council of Churches.

Dr Rinkel, before becoming Archbishop of Utrecht, was the Principal of the Dutch Old Catholic Theological College at Amersfoort, and is a distinguished theologian. He took a prominent part in the work which led to the recognition of Anglican orders by the Old Catholic Church of Holland in 1925. He has been a strong advocate of the ecumenical movement since its inception, and attended the conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh in 1937. E.P.S. Geneva

FRANCE — The Task of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches

A regional Conference of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, was assembled in Lyons (3-5, June 1947) with the delegates of the National Councils of Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland.

Having studied, on the one hand, the situation in these different countries, on the other hand, the new schemes of the Alliance's Constitution, the Conference came to the following conclusions:

1) The task undertaken by the Alliance in the past, under the inspiration of Jesus Christ, is more urgent than ever. It must be pursued in order to establish at last in the Churches and religious movements the community of Christians responsible for the mission of reconciliation and peace bestowed upon them by the Prince of Peace. Thus the World Alliance is convinced to serve the whole ecumenical cause and remains faithful to its own call. It will take particular circumstances into account, in its relations with the ecumenical movement and its organisms, as well as with the pacifistsmovements, especially the Associations for the United Nations.

2) As to the draft Constitution, the Conference expresses the following wishes: The National Councils will be free, according to circumstances, to invite members of other Christian confessions, inasmuch as they favour the common aim. The principle of individual and non-official representation will be maintained.

3) Moreover, this cooperation, according to the same principles, will be extended to all religious beliefs, inasmuch as their members will be ready to fight for fellowship between the nations and for peace.

The General Secretary and Mrs Dexter reported on their visits in Italy, Greece and Turkey, where influential groups are coming together, under the Orthodox as well as under the Mohammedans. They were greatly interested in the work of the World Alliance, in the efforts in favour of the United Nations and on the scheme of a World Congress of Religions for peace (see E.P.S. No. 23).

The study of Pastor Jézéquel, chairman of the French branch on world government plan, convinced the delegates of the necessity of working towards that goal, in and through the Churches, but in supporting and enlarging the United Nations and their councils. The remarkable report of Dr Bouvier, chairman of the Swiss branch on the Displaced Persons will be published.

A service of Holy Communion, presided by a French and an Italien pastor has fully expressed the spirit of faith, prayer and consecration which characterised this meeting. E.P.S. Geneva

JAPAN

A Christian Prime Minister

General MacArthur, commenting on the election of Mr. Tetsu Katayama as Japan's Prime Minister, said that "for the first time, Japan is led by a Christian, who throughout his life has been a member of the Presbyterian Church. This reflects the complete religious tolerance which now dominates the Japanese mind, and the complete religious freedom which exists throughout this land."

General MacArthur said that Mr. Katayama's election has an added significance from the international standpoint inasmuch as the three great Oriental countries, China, the Philippines and Japan, are now led by Christians.

E.P.S. Geneva

INDIA

A Missionary Declaration on Indian Independance

The following declaration by about 350 missionaries assembled in Kodaikanal is published in the Christian weekly journal of public affairs "The Guardian" (May 1947):

"This group of missionaries, in convention at Kodaikanal, representing many nationalities and denominations, desires to express its gratitude that the day of India's independance has come. We are specially grateful that independance has come by mutual consent between Britain and India. We see the difficulties ahead but we believe these difficulties can be overcome. We believe that this new freedom will usher in an era of progress and prosperity for this country and, further, that free India will be an asset in the establishment of world freedom and peace. We pledge ourselves to help in every legitimate way to bring into being these possibilities. We would be servants of Christ and of India and would identify ourselves with the people of this ancient land now coming to a new birth, making their sorrows our sorrows, their joys our joys, and their future our future.

We believe in the right of the individual to outer expression of his inner conversion, but we have no desire to build up communal power for political ends through conversion. We think it debasing to religion and to politics to use a religious movement to gain political power.

We pledge ourselves to support in every legitimate way the lawfully established government set up to serve the interests of the people. We will give it our best. We would like the government to feel that they can call on us to help toward making India the land of our common hopes and of our prayers.

We are grateful that Indian Christians present whole-heartedly welcome the above statement. We look forward to an era of even closer cooperation and companionship with them so that together we may help to build the new India."

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

Radio Interviews on Reconstruction in Europe

A series of radio interviews will be conducted in several European countries by Church World Service, Protestant relief agency of the American Churches, to illustrate the working of the CWS rehabilitation programme. The interviews, to be arranged in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company, will be recorded and later used as a series of 13 radio programmes produced by the Joint Religious Radio Committee in New York.

Interviews will be designed to show how Europeans are reconstructing their own war-devastated areas with leadership and funds supplied by Church World Service. Those interviewed will be principally recipients of aid, but field workers, church leaders, relief officials and theological students also will be heard. When broadcast in the United States, the programmes will take the form of documentaries, dramatic programmes and interview shows.

E.P.S. Geneva

Ecumenical Activities in D.P. Camps in Germany and Austria

As the Y.M.C.A./Y.W.C.A. Service to Displaced Persons enters its third year of work, certain developments are seen to be necessary. Increasingly the D.Ps stand in need of personal spiritual help and encouragement, of opportunities for training and readjustment to their bewildering situation, of contact and information about the rest of the world from whom they seem so cut off, and of help in finding strength and hope to face a future in which they seem as pawns in a struggle of conflicting policies.

The programme which is envisaged in both Austria and Germany includes YMCA/YWCA summer camps for children and a number of short training courses, retreats and periods for rest and reorientation of pastors, teachers and youth leaders. These give unparalleled opportunities for people of different nationalities and confessions to meet each other, live, think and talk together, and realise their unity as fellow Christians. One of these retreats is described as follows:

"With the help of a subsidy from the World Council of Churches, it was possible to organise a retreat at Wildmoos near Innsbruck from May 22 to 28, 1947 under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. Pastor Romans Reinfels, a Latvian, who himself lives in a D.P. camp, Pastor Charles Brutsch of Geneva and secretaries of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. assumed responsibility for the spiritual guidance of the group of 25 students, mostly Latvians and Hungarians.

Bible study meetings on the great steps in God's plan for the salvation of the world and conferences on "Christ and the Church", "Christ and the Nations" "Christ and the family", "The Development of the Ecumenical Movement", all served to provoke very animated discussion.

Members of the meeting at Wildmoos have decided to meet again at regular intervals to continue, through Bible study, consideration of those problems which had been discussed together in a spirit of ecumenical brotherhood.

E.P.S.Geneva

Brief News

Czechoslovakia:- On July 1st, several war-damaged Youth Camps rebuilt with the aid of funds from Church World Service will open for the first time in eigh years. With the $50,000 received from CWS repairs are being made in the camps of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, the Lutheran Church in Slovakia, and the Congregationalist (Union of Czech Brethren) Church. E.P.S. Geneva

United States:- A plea for reunion of the "Northern" (2,200,000 members) and "Southern" (565,000 members) Presbyterian Churches was made at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. at Grand Rapids, May 23, 1947. The General Assembly took no vote on the plan, which is being distributed to presbyteries and synods of the Church for study and comment this year. The plan will be voted on at the 1948 General Assembly. E.P.S. Geneva

Great Britain:- The British film producer J. Arthur Rank was presented a special scroll for his outstanding achievements in the field of religious films by the World's Sunday School Association. E.P.S. Geneva

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GERMANY

Important Step Towards the Unity of the Evangelical Church

On June 5-6, 1947 the first meeting of the Church Assembly of the Evangelical Church in Germany met at Treysa. In addition to the Church authorities the parishes were represented through delegates from the regional Synods. Of the 111 members of the Church Assembly there were 45 leading personalities in church life from the Eastern zone, theologians and laymen, thus showing a desire for church unity cutting across all zonal barriers.

A central problem was the problem of confessional structure resulting from the mix-up of Lutheran Reform and United Churches and parishes, and the question of the future constitution of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). There was a heated discussion on the question as to how far the constitution of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany could be brought into harmony with the impending EKD order. In this connection Bishop Meiser of Munich explained the Lutheran Council's view, which helped to relieve tension. He explained that the United Lutheran Church of Germany wished to remain in brotherly communion with the other Churches within the EKD and that it felt itself responsible for the whole Evangelical church life.

As a result of discussion the following resolution was taken:

"The Church Assembly of EKD, which met in Treysa on June 5 and 6, affirms, after friendly discussion of the confessional basis of the EKD order:

1. The Church Assembly has noted with gratitude that the resolution of the Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church states: 'The United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) wishes to remain in brotherly communion within EKD with the other Evangelical Churches in Germany. It feels itself jointly responsible for the entire Evangelical Church in Germany and would regard it as harmful and detrimental for all concerned if the communion given to us from God to the enrichment of both parties were to be broken'.

2. It is agreed that the EKD is a union of the Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches. We trust that in this union, listening together to God's word, the Church in the New Testament sense may be realised.

3. It is agreed that EKD reaffirms the decisions taken at Barmen.

4. It is agreed that members of the Evangelical Church shall not be refused Holy Communion owing to membership of another confession in EKD.

5. The Church Assembly requests the Council of EKD to see that a binding theological treatise be published on the doctrine of the Holy Communion with regard to Church communion.

6. The Church Assembly regards it necessary for the constitution of the VELKD to be brought into harmony with the impending order of EKD. It takes note of the fact that the Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church has admitted the possibility of revising VELDS's constitution.

7. The Church Assembly affirms that to its knowledge the way is clear for a strengthening and order of EKD in the sense of forming a union of avowed

confessing Churches, and asks that as soon as possible the Council lay a draft order of EKD for approval before a Church Assembly convened for the purpose of forming the constitution.

The most important speakers were Pastor Niemöller, who reported on his journey to America, Pastor Asmussen, who gave a report on the activities of the EKD Council during the last two years, Prof. Bodensieck, representative of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ en America and Pastor Bachmann who, as representative of the World Council of Churches read a statement by the World Council of Churches on the coming World Church Conference in Amsterdam in 1948.

Bishop Wurm thanked the Christian Churches abroad for continually witnessing to their sharing of the German lot and for their willingness to help in the fight against the material distress of the German people. He expressed the wish that this generous attitude and breadth of vision which brought the spirit of peace in the place of hate and revenge, might also have its influence in the political field, resulting in the speeding up of release of prisoners of war, the shortening of internment and the resettlement of many skilled men into home and employment.

Pastor Asmussen made detailed mention in his report of the well-known Stuttgart declaration of guilt of 1945: "We have not convinced the whole German people, he said, but nevertheless what we said at the time is shown to be valid". The desire was expressed that this message of guilt should be complemented by a word of forgiveness. But it was recognised that it would be difficult to find the right tone for this, without giving rise to further misunderstandings. In the meantime the Church should not remain silent to what it has recognised as unjust. E.P.S. Geneva

Round Table Conference of Christian Politicians at Bossey

A round table conference of Christian politicians was held at the Ecumenical Institute à Bossey from June 13-16, 1947, 16 different countries being represented, including the United States, India and New Zealand. Invitation to the conference was issued by the Study Department of the World Council of Churches, with a view to assisting in preparations for the first General Assembly of the World Council in Amsterdam, and at the same time in order to give Christian politicians of various different nationalities and different parties an opportunity of conversation together. In the course of discussion, the conference affirmed the necessity of the Church and individual Christians facing their responsibility for political order anew; in a great number of countries a start has already been made in this direction. The conference gave the persons present an opportunity of exchanging experiences with each other in this connection. The problem of "Christianity and Socialism" very soon came to the forefront. It was agreed that whereever Christianity could be brought to the working class this could greatly affect the future of our culture The question as to the value of particular Christian parties was discussed and also the relation to the various forms of Roman Catholic political activity.

The conference decided to ask the Study Department of the World Council to convene further conferences of the same kind at regular intervals. Propositions were put forward as to ways in which the conference could be made more representative. If possible another conference is to be convened before the full meeting of the World Council in the summer of 1948. E.P.S. Geneva

New Books on the Ecumenical Movement

The stock of ecumenical literature has been enriched by some new publications.

In Sweden Dr Nils Karlström wrote a thesis for his doctorate, which he published as the first volume of a great work on the "Christian struggles for unity during the World War 1914-1918" (Svenska Kyrkans Diakoniestyrelses Bokförlag, Stockholm, price 18 Sw.Kr.).

This is the first time that a scholarly presentation of the History of the Ecumenical Movement has been attempted, of which the first completed section has been described by Professor Gunnar Westin, professor in Church history at the Uppsala Theological Faculty, as "a credit to the research work on Church history in Sweden". In his first book Dr Karlström not only gives a detailed and unparalleled account of the history of the ecumenical movement of the last century up to the first WorldWar, but he also describes in detail the personal contribution of Archbishop Nathan Soederblom, the great pioneer of the ecumenical movement, for whom Dr Karlström had worked as secretary. The book is also of great import for the present day, for the question with which the author is wrestling and to which his book is partly an answer is: How can the ecumenical idea become the living desire of the Christian world? Dr Karlström, who, after presenting this argument, has now become a lecturer in Church history in Uppsala intends writing a short comprehensive outline of the history of the ecumenical movement of the last hundred years up to the present day for theological students and pastors, in addition to his great work already begun (of which the next volume will deal with the development of the ecumenical movement up to the World Conference at Stockholm 1925).

In France the most recent publication in "Je Sers" edition, Paris, is Pastor Boegner's "The Problem of Christian Unity". This book, written by the President of the French Protestant Federation, one of the five Presidents of the World Council of Churches, is intended for all who ask "whether the Christian Churches still have a message to give to the torn and disturbed world in which we live". Its purpose is therefore none other than to define "the problem which confessional divisions inevitably pose and to show the way in which non Roman Catholic Churches have been led to try and find a solution".

Pastor Boegner's book is already recognisably useful as a practical means of ecumenical instruction not only for Christian laymen, but also for entire church congregations. After a striking portrayal of divided Christendom, the causes and effects of the division in the Church, the author describes "the new climate" in the ecumenical sphere of readiness of understanding. He reveals the basis of Christian unity and above all describes the being and structure of the World Council of Churches which is preparing to form its constitution in Amsterdam in 1948. The book is therefore of particular value for the preparation of Christian circles for the first Assembly of the World Council, which may be an important step on the path of Christian unity. "Will the unity of the Church be the gift of God to a world which the atomic age just begun promises to bring most tragic results?" In the last chapter of his book the author tries to give an answer, not only by taking an eschatological vision, but emphasising the immediate opportunities for a world wide Christendom, conscious of its ecumenical task, and obedient to its Lord Jesus Christ.

S.P.E. Geneva